

VZCZCXRO3196
OO RUEHLH RUEHPW
DE RUEHLH #0025/01 0440626
ZNR UUUUU ZZH
O 130626Z FEB 10
FM AMCONSUL LAHORE
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 4319
INFO RUEHIL/AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD IMMEDIATE 5017
RUEHBUL/AMEMBASSY KABUL IMMEDIATE 0549
RUEHLO/AMEMBASSY LONDON PRIORITY 0247
RUEHNE/AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI PRIORITY 0929
RUEHKP/AMCONSUL KARACHI PRIORITY 2212
RUEHPW/AMCONSUL PESHAWAR PRIORITY 1890
RHMFISS/CDR USCENTCOM MACDILL AFB FL
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHINGTON DC
RHEHAAA/NSC WASHINGTON DC
RUMICEA/USCENTCOM INTEL CEN MACDILL AFB FL
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHDC
RUEHLH/AMCONSUL LAHORE PRIORITY 5487

UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 LAHORE 000025

SENSITIVE
SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PHUM](#) [KIRF](#) [KWMN](#) [PK](#)

SUBJECT: ACCUSATIONS OF TORTURE IN DEATH OF ADOLESCENT MAID IN LAHORE

11. (SBU) Summary. The death of 12-year old girl, allegedly at the hands of her employers, offers a glimpse into the world of child labor in Pakistan. Shazia Masih, who died on January 22, worked for seven months as a servant in the home of a Lahore attorney. The attorney, his wife, son, and sister-in-law have been charged with murder, along with the broker who introduced Masih to the attorney. Lahore Cantonment Court granted the attorney and the broker 14-days judicial remand, commitment of the accused to judicial custody after a bail application has been denied, on February 10. On January 25 the Lahore Sessions Court released the attorney's family members on bail. Minority rights and women's rights organizations have demonstrated against the young maid's treatment, and local bar associations have counter-demonstrated on behalf of their accused member. End Summary.

- - -
Child Servants in Pakistan
- - -

12. (SBU) Shazia Masih began working for Lahore High Court Advocate Chaudhry Mohammad Naeem and his family in July 2009. According to press reports, she received 1,000 Pakistani Rupees (USD 12) per month for her services as a maid. According to media statements by Naeem's wife, Masih was working to pay off a debt owed by her mother to Naeem. Some media reports have claimed that a broker named Amanat Ali trafficked or sold Masih to Naeem, but Post has been unable to verify this.

13. (SBU) Note: It is common practice in Pakistan for children to work as domestic servants. Over 300,000 children work as domestic laborers, according to the International Labor Organization. Wealthy and middle-class families often hire an entire family to work as servants in their home, including school-age children. Masih and her family are Christians, a tiny and often abused minority in Pakistan. Many Pakistani Christians were members of the lowest castes of Hinduism prior to their ancestral conversion to Christianity, and the stigma sticks. In October 2009 Post hosted an Eid lunch for students of school run by a non-profit organization. The students were all children of domestic servants with a monthly family income of 2,000 - 5,000 Pakistani Rupees (USD 24 - 60). One second-grader, when asked what she liked to do for fun after school, frowned slightly then replied "nothing," because she went to work with her mother every day after school. End Note.

- - -
Allegation of Torture Leading to Death

- - -
¶4. (SBU) On January 21, Naeem took an unconscious Shazia Masih to the emergency room of Jinnah Hospital in Lahore, according to Katherine Karamat, Program Officer for Centre for Legal Aid, Assistance and Settlement (CLAAS). Medical reports from the emergency room stated that she was not responsive, and that Naeem reported she had fallen down the stairs three days earlier. After dropping Masih at the emergency room, Naeem went to her parent's home, asked them to come with him, and dropped them by the hospital. There they learned of their daughter's condition, according to Aslam Pervaiz Sahotra, Chairman, Human Liberation Commission of Pakistan. Shazia Masih was pronounced dead on January 22.

¶5. (SBU) The preliminary medical examiner's autopsy report listed 18 injuries including bruised swelling on forehead and cheeks caused by "blunt means," and various cuts on feet caused by a "sharp edged weapon." The death certificate, provided to Poloff on February 12 by Sahotra, listed the cause of death as cardiopulmonary arrest. CLAAS and other human rights organizations believe Masih was tortured to death by Naeem and/or his family. G.A. Khan Tariq, lawyer for Naeem, told the media Masih had an epileptic fit on January 21 and Naeem took her to the hospital, where she died. Punjab Chief Minister Shahbaz Sharif has requested an inquiry into the incident. Senior Minister in the Punjab Provincial Cabinet Raja Riaz, on behalf of President Asif Zardari, pledged 500,000 Pakistani Rupees (5,900 USD) to the family.

- - -
Ongoing Proceedings against the Accused

LAHORE 00000025 002 OF 002

- - -
¶6. (SBU) January 22, police filed a First Incident Report (FIR) charging Naeem, his wife, son, sister-in-law and broker with premeditated murder under section 302 of Pakistan Penal Code, according to CLAAS. Police arrested Naeem and Ali on January 25. The Lahore Sessions Court released Naeem's family on pre-arrest bail. Naeem and Ali appeared before Lahore Cantonment Court on January 26, February 4 and February 9. On February 9, the court ordered 14 days of "judicial remand," which extends their pre-trial detention to allow police time to finish their investigation. Both men are currently being held in Camp Jail, Lahore. A bail hearing for Naeem and Ali is scheduled for February 13.

¶7. (SBU) Naeem is a former president of the Lahore District Bar Association. Punjab's thirty-five district bar associations are stronger in numbers than the Lahore High Court Bar Association, as they contain members of lower courts and are comprised mainly of younger lawyers. Members of the district bar associations have demonstrated at each of Naeem's hearings to date, clashing with police, journalists, and human rights activists. CLAAS's Karamat has expressed concern that pressure from the lawyers could result in the court dismissing the charges against Naeem.

- - -
Comment: Remarkable Possibility of Justice for the Vulnerable
- - -

¶8. (SBU) From a local perspective, what makes the case unique is not that a child was harmed by an employer, it is that the employer is facing consequences for harm done to a child while in his employ. Lahore's criminal justice authorities have thus far resisted pressure to release Naeem, which is promising. Given the vast social gap between a wealthy attorney and the girl-child of Christian servants, even this much official attention to her death is remarkable. The district bar associations' approach to this case is further evidence that the lawyers' movements are not necessarily liberal or pro-democracy; self-interest is also a driving factor. Lawyers and human rights activists will continue to clash outside the courtroom. Post will monitor and report as the case progresses.

